

53

# The CASE of all the WEAVERS of ENGLAND, except some few that are joyned with the Lutestring-Company.

**T**hat none but Merchants, Mercers, and two or three Weavers, were at first Incorporated by the Name of the Lutestring-Company, and they to insnare all other Weavers, inticed such as they could prevail with, to joyn with them; and having, as they pretend, some Writing or Instrument under the Hands and Seals of some of the Masters and Assistants of the Company of *London Weavers*, would have all Weavers concluded by it.

And under colour of hindering the Sale of such Alamodes and Lutestrings, as might Clandestinely and Illegally be Imported from *France*, the Lutestring Company obtained from the last Parliament, at the close of the Sessions, a Clause to be inserted in the Coal-Act, whereby it is Prohibited under the Penalty of a Hundred Pound, to sell any of those sort of Silks, unless they are first Marked and Sealed with the Mark and Lead used at the *Custom-House* for Forreign Goods; or the Mark and Lead used by the Lutestring Company for the Silks of their own making.

It manifestly appears, that by this Clause, it is not the Importation of *French Goods* that is Prevented, but the selling of those of the same Nature which are made at home; for notwithstanding that the Making such Silks is not Prohibited, their Sale is, there being no place provided where our own Weavers can Mark them when made.

By this Clause, they have as plainly Established a Monopoly in favour of their own Company, and they are at this time, by Virtue of it, Prosecuting in the *Exchequer* a great number of Weavers, who have all along for these many years last past, made these sorts of Silks in *England*, and that only, because the Silks they sold (which were made by them in *England*) were not Marked with the aforesaid Marks, tho' it was impossible for the Weavers to get the Seal of the *Custom-House*, that being only for Forreign Goods; and the Lutestring Company refused to Seal them with their Seal, when they were desired so to do.

This Abuse is intolerable, and more mischievous than can be easily either Expressed, or Conceived.

It hinders Multitudes of Men from getting their Livelyhoods by their Lawful Trades, which is against the Reason of all Laws, and the very Foundations of Society.

It puts the Subjects of *England* into a worse Condition than Strangers, since the same Silks being made in all Forreign Parts (*France* excepted) may be sold here safely, but those that are actually made in *England*, can neither be bought, nor sold, without incurring so great a Penalty.

Besides the Manufacture of Alamodes and Lutestrings, will by this means, never be brought to Perfection; because the Company having the sole Use and Exercise of it, will not only sell their Goods at what Rate they please, whether they are good or bad; but then, even the few Workmen that the Company themselves Employ, will be reduced to another Hardship; which is, to Work at whatsoever Price they please to set upon their Labour, since they can have such Work no where else.

But farther, the said Lutestring Company can have no just Title, or so much as Pretence, to hinder the other Weavers from making these sorts of Silks; for their pretended Patent being only Granted upon the Account, that it was a New, and their own Invention; and that such Silks had never been made before in *England*, and there being the Oaths of many Weavers who have Practised it many Years before (some of which have had Fourteen or Fifteen Looms at work) it is Evident, that neither their Patent, nor the Clause complained of, were at first Founded upon Reasonable or True Suggestions.

Therefore, it is most Humbly Prayed, that the High Court of Parliament will Appoint some Place, where the Weavers, who are Independent of the Lutestring Company, may have their Silks Marked and Sealed; and it is Humbly Offered, that the Weavers Hall is the fittest, unless, for the more certain keeping out of all *French Goods* of this sort, it shall be Deemed more Proper, to order, that all Pieces of these Silks that shall be made in *England*, as well by the Lutestring Company, as Private Weavers, shall be Marked whilst in the Looms, by some Person, or Persons, Nominated by the Parliament for that Purpose: Or lastly, unless They shall be Pleased to Provide some other Method which may be more Agreeable to Their Own Wisdom.